9
Walter E. Corbin
Florence, Mass.

A MEMORIAL SERMON,

IN TWO PARTS,

PREACHED AT

Brimfield, February 7th, 1864,

BY

REV. JOSEPH VAILL, D. D.,

COMMEMORATIVE OF HIS SETTLEMENT IN THAT PLACE, FIFTY YEARS AGO,

AND

Affectionately Dedicated to his Former Charge.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

SPRINGFIELD:
SAMUEL BOWLES & COMPANY, PRINTERS.
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HALF-CENTURY SERMON.

MORNING SERMON.

"REMEMBER THE DAYS OF OLD, CONSIDER THE YEARS OF MANY GENERATIONS; ASK THY FATHER AND HE WILL SHOW THEE, THY ELDERS AND THEY WILL TELL THEE."

DEUTERONOMY, 32, 7.

THIS passage forms a part of one of the most sublime series of utterances anywhere recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures. It is found in what is denominated the Song of Moses, which as a Christian poet, he put forth just before the close of his mortal life, and in connection with his ascent to the top of Mount Nebo, to view the land which God had promised to give unto the children of Israel for a possession, but which he was not permitted to enter. Moses, like a good man, bowed submissively to the holy will of his God. Gratifying as it might have been to him, as the leader of the people for so many years during their wanderings in the wilderness, to have gone in with their posterity to possess the land; yet under the all-wise decisions of God to the contrary, he lost none of his Christian equanimity, nor his regard for the high interests of the people, whose murmurings had so often fallen upon his ears.

His song is indicative of a heart deeply imbued with Christian benevolence. It breathes forth the spirit of the most noble philanthropy. He showed the people both

Far be it from me to wish to gather laurels around my own brow. My only desire is to trace out the hand of God and lead you and myself to give Him glory, while I call to mind all the way, in which the Lord my God has led me these fifty years, to humble me and prove me and see what is in my heart.

Allow me here to add, I should the more readily go into your history than my own, but for the fact that some thirty-three years ago I wrote a brief history of Brimfield, which was published, and which I presume is found in most of your dwellings. And then your history and mine, during the period of my ministry among you, are so intimately blended that in giving you mine, I give yours, so far at least as pertains to the labors and results of my appropriate office work here. But to proceed—

"Old Brimfield," as it was familiarly called by the aged people, in my early ministry, has lost none of its attractions since my vision first rested upon it, from the eminence directly South of this village, where the traveled road then went, instead of through the valley, as now. As from yonder hill I lifted my eyes to behold all the plain, that it was well watered everywhere, even as the garden of the Lord, as Lot beheld the plain of Jordan, I did indeed cherish the hope that its inhabitants were far in advance of those that dwelt in that plain, by whose filthy conversation his righteous soul was constantly vexed. Nor did I find myself laboring under any marked misapprehension, although the town, at that period, had no very enviable distinction for its high standard of moral sentiment or practice. Religion was at a melancholy low ebb. A little church of only 70 members, and these mostly far advanced in age, constituted the amount of the religious forces in a population of then 1600 people. The town had never been visited with a revival of religion, and some of the more aged members of the church were decidedly hostile to every thing that bore the name. Besides, Socinian sentiments had found their way into this

community, under the false but somewhat plausible instruction of one whom a portion of the church were ready to sustain. Knowing these and many other facts adverse to the success of one who would preach the orthodox faith, it seemed at the outset a very hopeless case for me, then, perhaps, the fifteenth candidate; those who had gone before me having utterly failed to unite the people. And then again, I was but a youth, with only twenty-three years and four months over my head, and of course with little experience, and so few written sermons that I could conveniently carry them in my pocket.

Besides it should be considered that the church and *town* constituted the ecclesiastical society, with power to vote in calling and settling a minister, the town then, as now, embracing men of all religious shades and complexions, from the rigidly orthodox down to those who would find no difficulty in striking hands with almost every form of infidelity.

The existing state of things presented a very forlorn case for me. The ten or twelve sermons I preached here as a candidate, puerile as they might be, failed not to hold forth the fundamental doctrines of the cross. My conscience, at this moment, testifies that I never disguised the matter. I did not fail to show my colors. Everybody that heard me, knew or might know what I believed. Now, who could have dreamed that under these circumstances, I should have received a call to settle in this place; and much less that that call, in an unusually full town meeting, should be unanimous with only one dissentient? That a youth of twenty-three, of the evangelical faith, and yet green and inexperienced, should have united this disunited and disjointed people, after so many ineffectual trials, seemed marvelous. Everybody around, marveled at it. But what could I do but accept? I look at it now, as wonderful, that I did. But the hand of God was in this matter, as the subsequent history of my unworthy ministry furnished most abundant proof. The time had

come, that Zion's desolations should be restored here. There was a great work to be done, and the feebleness of the instrument by which it was to be accomplished, proved that it was the work of God.

My ordination and installation took place in due time, and that was on the second day of February, 1814, just fifty years from Tuesday last. Let me call your attention to that solemn occasion, the most so, in which I had then borne a part. It is as vivid in my recollection, as of yesterday's occurrence. It was a venerable council, and rendered eminently so from the presence of my venerable father, to whom, in compliance with my invitation, was assigned the service of preaching the sermon, which was given to the public in print. That ordaining council was no mean body. It was graced with the names of Snell and Stone and Ely and Lane and Colton, as well as that of Vaill, the elder, and William F. Vaill, my beloved brother, now pursuing the work of a home missionary in Illinois, at the age of eighty years.

Most of the members of this council have gone to mingle in other and more solemn scenes. The snow on the day of ordination was deep, attended with a sudden thaw, but notwithstanding the unpropitiousness of the weather, the church was filled to overflowing, and every thing passed off to the satisfaction of all concerned, unless I except the martial music, with which the council was escorted to and from the house of God, at the instance and under the direction of a certain ambitious colonel of those days, who seemed to think the music essential to the "perfection of beauty" on that solemn occasion.

There are some here who will recollect the scenes of that, to me, most thrilling event. The grave visage, and the solemn voice of my honored father, then ten years younger than I am to-day, are not obliterated from my mind. But where are the principal actors among *you*, in the scene of my ordination? Every member of the committee, both of the church and town, who put their signa-

tures to the letters missive have long since passed away. In the place of the fathers are the children—and no waymark, do I witness, more strikingly setting forth the fact of fifty years as having passed away, than to have noticed that the present active men of Brimfield were most of them then unborn, whose parents I joined in marriage in the early part of my ministry.

And just here I wish to say, that a deep solemnity comes over me as I call up the names of the leading families of Brimfield, fifty years ago, numbers of which as to their name have become extinct. This applies to the name of Eaton, Danielson, Thompson, Burt, Bruce, Fairbanks, Keyes, Lyon, Patrick, Park, Salisbury, Trask, Carter, Williams and some others.* Numbers of these names designated families that were large and prominent, contributing not a little to give character to the town. There are other names that covered five or six families, all proceeding from the same stock, that have almost entirely disappeared. So great has been the change in this regard, that I feel myself well nigh among strangers, when I visit the place, and especially as I look upon the faces that sur-

* The first name mentioned in the above list is that of Eaton. The only family of this name with which I was acquainted was that of Gen. William Eaton, who was a man of considerable distinction, under the United States government. He was for several years an officer in the United States army, consul at the regency of Tunis on the coast of Barbary, and commander of the Christian and other forces that marched from Egypt through the desert of Barca in 1805, and conquered the city of Derne, which led to the treaty of peace between the United States and the regency of Tripoli. Gen. Eaton died in June, 1811, at the age of forty-seven. His wife was the widow of Gen. Timothy Danielson, who died in Brimfield, who was a gentleman of liberal education, and who sustained many important civil and military offices. Gen. Eaton's marriage with Mrs. Danielson doubtless brought him to reside in Brimfield, where he caused to be built a somewhat famous house, which for many years after my settlement graced the plain west of the church. The General left five children, three daughters and two sons. One of the daughters during the early part of my ministry, was married to Rev. William B. Sprague, D. D., then of West Springfield, now of Albany, N. Y., who died in less than a year from the time of her marriage,—Gen. Eaton died some two years before my settlement, but his family were among my early parishioners.

round me, as I meet you in the house of God. It hardly seems that this can be the spot, where for twenty-five years I ministered to this people, when I was familiar in every family, and knew you all, not excepting the little children, as the result of that pastoral visitation to which I was constantly given.

The scene of my ordination having passed, and my domestic relations having been consummated, I began to identify myself with my flock, and you may be assured, I found my heart and my hands full. I look from the stand-point I now occupy, with astonishment, upon the amount of labor I was enabled to perform in the midst of a population of sixteen hundred people, scattered over hill and dale, in a somewhat extended territory, and with no other organized society in the town, and no other minister but the youthful and inexperienced pastor of this church.

Sure I am, my heart would have died within me, had not my Covenant God been with me. I entered upon my work here with a trembling, anxious heart, and not without many misgivings. I saw how much there was to be done; and as new scenes of labor and trial opened upon me, I was often led to exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things!"

In quite the incipient stages of my ministry, I had to encounter many drawbacks upon my enjoyment; not for lack of kind feeling on the part of many, but from the fact that false doctrine had gained so much ascendency as to place me in antagonism, in my public preaching, with some of my respected hearers. Error had obtained such hold of the minds of numbers as to render what I regarded sound doctrine deeply disgusting to them, so much so as to render visible their impatience while listening to my appeals from the pulpit.

And then, the church edifice, in my early ministry, with its high arch, and its numerous and loose windows, was rendered a cold house for winter. For successive years I

preached in it without any warming apparatus that was visible to the eye, and while the audience generally tarried through the service, the preacher received many a hint, by the rubbing of hands and the shrugging of shoulders, that no word from his lips could be so grateful as "Amen." And then followed such a rush for the doors as might not have been inappropriate to an alarm of fire, but not very becoming for an egress from the sanctuary of the Lord. It was some years after my settlement that stoves were introduced into the church. Strong prejudices resisted the movement. My hearers, some of them at least, had rather sit an hour and a half (for you must know our services were longer then than now) with the mercury at zero, than make any innovations on the old and venerated customs of their fathers. Hence the first movement in this direction met with but little favor. The church and town were called together to discuss this momentous question. The matter was earnestly debated. The pros and cons were carefully considered. At length one somewhat aged gentleman, as I was informed, rose and said, "We do not need, fellow citizens, a stove in this house, to warm it up; the preaching is hot enough for that purpose." No small compliment to the young preacher, that he was able to warm his hearers, and make them comfortable in a cold day, by his *burning words* superseding the necessity of *burning coals*. In process of time, by consent of the town, provided it should be no expense to it, stoves went into the church, much to the satisfaction of both preacher and hearers; and now I suppose, a warming apparatus of some kind is regarded so indispensable, that without it a considerable portion of the people would absent themselves in winter from church.

In addition to these drawbacks and discouragements, I had but comparatively few to co-operate with me; the church itself being very small, and a portion of it feeling no sympathy, in the measures, that the young and somewhat ardent pastor would set forward. As I prosecuted

my labors, light began gradually to dawn upon my pathway. The sanctuary was visited with constantly increasing numbers, and one and another began to enquire after God. Scarcely a communion season occurred without the admission of some to the church—either by letter or profession,—and during the first four years of my ministry, as many had been received, as were members, at the time of my settlement.

These accessions, together with a marked improvement in the morals of the people, gave me courage to prosecute my work, and while as I supposed, I shared somewhat largely in the affection and confidence of my parishioners, yet reasoning from the past in their history, I was not without my fears of a rupture of some sort at no distant day, and at times, saw, or thought I saw, symptoms of its approach. But in general, things moved on with as little friction as could be anticipated. Many did not altogether relish my preaching, and some of the aged ones thought it quite out of the question, that one so youthful could teach them anything, yet they would hear me notwithstanding.

You must excuse me, my friends, if I say, that from the time of my settlement, the religious aspect of things, in this community, began to assume a more encouraging appearance. I soon discovered that the Lord had something for me to do here, and much as I might desire to consult my ease, he would not allow me to be idle, and blessed be his name, he gave me health and vigor, and a disposition to prosecute my work. My labors were arduous. There being no other minister in town, and with a population considerable larger than now, I was called to officiate on almost all *funeral* occasions, at an average number annually, of at least twenty-five. Within about two years subsequent to my settlement, the town was visited with the *spotted fever*, so called, and in the midst of one of the coldest winters I ever experienced.

Persons for a number of successive weeks, died almost daily, and for months, nearly my whole time was occupied

with the sick and dying and officiating at funerals. I was sometimes called from my bed at midnight, with the mercury at zero, to go and pray with some expiring parishioner.

That was indeed a doleful winter. The mantle of death seemed to be laid upon everything. Many an habitation was rendered desolate and many a heart was wrung with grief. I stood daily among the dying and the dead, never shrinking from visiting the dwellings that were full of the deadly infection. God carried me through that horrible winter, and nothing but his protecting mercy saved me from falling a victim to the deadly malady.

I need not detain you to speak of my labors during the first four years. The educational interests of the town, which were at a very low ebb, received my early attention, and I flatter myself, that through my feeble labors as a member and chairman of the school committee, I was instrumental of somewhat raising, the literary standard in this community. All the school-houses but one, were rebuilt, which by this time, must have again become dilapidated, and require, I should think, a new and improved edition. Those labors were continued through my entire ministry. I cannot tell how many school visits I made, nor how many teachers I assisted in examining. Both might be numbered by hundreds. My work bestowed in this direction occasions no regrets. A minister should be foremost in promoting the educational interests of his people.

The town of Brimfield has not been particularly distinguished in giving its sons a collegiate education. Eight only, if I rightly remember, sought and obtained such an education, in the course of my ministry. Two of these graduated at Amherst College, one at Harvard, two at Yale, two at the Wesleyan University at Middletown, and one at Dartmouth College. Two of these only, entered the ministry. I was once asked by a very intelligent lady, now the wife of one of the above mentioned graduates, if I were not proud of the young men that had

come up in Brimfield during my ministry there? This led me to turn my thoughts upon this matter, and looking back from the stand-point I now occupy, it gives me great pleasure to call to remembrance the names of numbers, who were either very young or unborn at my settlement here, who have made their mark in the world. Some as professional men, others as men of business; while two at least are doing honor to themselves and to you, as brigadier generals in the noble, loyal army of our country. It does not become me to mention names, but my thoughts rest upon a goodly number, around whom clustered my affections in their early childhood, who still live to bless the world, as occupying posts of usefulness and distinction, more or less conspicuous. Three young men went forth as missionaries, among the western Indians. It is an honor to Brimfield, in which, I claim no share however—that one of the late governors* of the State of Vermont was a native of this town, and at the time of my settlement here, was a young man of twenty, who with two other brothers emigrated to Vermont, where they built up one of the most flourishing villages of the State† by their invention of Scales—known as "Fairbanks' Patent Scales," of wide-world renown.‡

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*Gov. Erastus Fairbanks. †St. Johnsbury.

‡The name of Pyncheon was honorably known in Brimfield fifty years ago, in connection with Stephen Pyncheon, Esq., who occupied a somewhat large place in this community. He was the son of the Hon. William Pyncheon, of Springfield. Graduated at Yale College in 1789, with high and merited reputation. Commenced the practice of law in Brimfield in 1793. Here he sustained with ability many offices of trust and importance. For twenty-five years he occupied the office of town clerk, for nineteen years he represented the town in the General Court of Massachusetts. He closed his life while serving his constituents in this honorable capacity. For seventeen years he served the town as post master. He was for many years chairman of the board of selectmen, and justice of the peace, and for the three last years of his life, he occupied the post of judge of the court of sessions. All these offices he sustained with ability and honor, and continued to enjoy the undiminished confidence of his fellow townsmen till his death, which took place very suddenly while at Boston as representative, in the winter of 1823. Mr. Pyncheon became a decided Christian early in my ministry, and in the summer of 1815, made a public profession of religion, and ever after maintained a life of exemplary piety.

Here, it is due to say, that fifty years ago, the inhabitants of this town, in point of general character would suffer nothing in comparison with those in any neighboring towns. There was a good deal of what was called "aristocracy," and it is truthful to say, that many of the people here stood high, at least, in their own estimation, and considered Brimfield as forming a pretty strong radiating point of intelligence and refinement, and in this regard, it is presumed, there has been no deterioration; most certainly your external appearance has greatly improved.

I early, in despite of the deep-rooted prejudices of some of the members of the church, established, what were then, rather sneeringly called "night meetings," and in your school-houses, as well as private dwellings, many hundreds of times, did I plead the cause of Christ with those, who in goodly numbers, were accustomed to convene at these meetings. My voice, for successive years, and many times in a year, was heard in every school-house in town, and not without the most gratifying results, for the cause to which I had given myself.

Pretty uniformly I sustained a third service on the sabbath. These labors, together with my weekly preparations for the pulpit, the cares of a rising family, the superintendence of a little farm, as forming a necessary auxiliary to my annual support, (as you are aware that my stipend was not of a princely character), gave me full employment. And in addition to this, the time that was necessarily occupied in waiting on traveling company, for you must know that ministers fifty years ago, were accustomed to travel by private conveyance, and to quarter themselves very unceremoniously on their brethren by the way, so that I was obliged to keep a sort of minister's tavern.

All these matters, and others, I cannot stay to name, kept me, you may well suppose, fully occupied, allowing comparatively little time for sleep, and less for lounging.

I have spoken of the first four years, as years of toil

and anxiety and not without some gratifying results. But it was reserved for the years 1818 and 1819, to "see greater things than these." Such a scene of God's wonder-working mercy was then witnessed, as was never before experienced on this ground. Nearly an entire century had passed away, under the successive ministry of five pastors, but nothing approximating to a *general* revival of religion, had ever been witnessed. The ministry of the reverend and excellent Nehemiah Williams was, to a good degree, successful. He was beloved and honored, but both during his ministry and that of those who preceded him, there was no special effusions of the Holy Spirit. In the fifth year of my unworthy pastorate and in the autumn of 1818, the windows of heaven were opened, and such a scene of Divine wonders was witnessed, as led us to say: "this is the Lord, let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation." God was here. His stately steppings were seen; His own Almighty hand was felt. The stoutest hearts were appalled, and all, well nigh, were constrained to acknowledge that it was the work of a wonder-working God. I should love to dwell on the scenes of that revival, some of which were of a most remarkable, as well as affecting character. One of these was witnessed in the conversion of an old revolutionary soldier, who at the age of sixty-one, and from the midst of the deepest and most deadly opposition to the doctrines of Christianity, was brought to sit as a little child at the feet of Jesus. His convictions were short, but awfully overwhelming, ere he submitted to God; and for twenty years, to the day of his death, he was one of the most lovely Christian men I ever saw. I might detail many remarkable instances of conversion, but my limits will not allow of it. For the results of that revival as gathered into the church in Brimfield, I refer you to the "Annals" of this church, as prepared by your late lamented pastor, which, though not entirely accurate, furnish the main fruits of that revival, as seen in the admissions of 1819, embracing the number of one hundred

and six, at five successive communion seasons. The greatest number was at the communion in March, it being *forty*, more, it is believed, than were ever simultaneously admitted to this church since its formation.

This revival marked a new era in the history of this community. It was not a sudden flash, soon subsiding, and leaving us in deeper gloom than before. It continued in its power many months, and in its blessed results, up to this day. Doubtless a large majority of its subjects have been gathered to their fathers, yet there are, I believe, some here now, who are cherishing hope of heaven, as the fruit of that blessed work of God.

While it was extensive and powerful among the youth, a goodly number in the midst of life were made its happy subjects, among whom were more than fifty heads of families, most of whom have gone to their rest, while the few that remain are bending under the weight of years.

This church from that period began to assume a new appearance, and religion, long confined to narrow limits, began greatly to extend its influence, and to be more generally respected. That class of persons were brought into it, on whom was fastened its hope for future strength and efficiency. Nothing in its past history had transpired that furnished so much occasion for devout gratitude, as this revival. It laid the foundation for still future revivals. It opened the way for the introduction of a new confession of faith and covenant, the former having really no character at all, which I had been laboring to have supplanted for one more evangelical, but in vain, till now. It gave new efficiency to the discipline of the church. It was the germ of those benevolent operations, for which this church has been somewhat distinguished. From that time, your charities were increased many fold. It formed the starting point of your sabbath school, and those associations for biblical instruction which existed under my ministry, and which now occupy so important a place in this community. It was as life from the dead, to almost everything that was good.

Most of what I have already said, you are aware, pertains to my ministry during its first six years. I can hardly forbear here to mention that in 1820 we built what was familiarly called a "Conference Hall." That building grew out of our necessities. We had no basement in our church for a lecture room then, as you now have, and of course no place for prayer meetings and meetings of the church for business, or for improvement in sacred music, except the body of the church or the hall of the village hotel, where singing schools were held, and where we met, strange as it may seem, to examine candidates for admission to the church, when the examination was a public one, as was the fact in connection with the revival of which I have already spoken.

Besides, we had no place for select schools, the establishment of which, in my desire to promote the best interests of my people, formed a most important object. For this purpose two sisters of mine had been successively employed, sometimes holding a school in my own house, or in the hall of a neighboring public house.

Thus situated, we formed the plan of erecting, at a moderate expense, a building to cover all these purposes. It stood nearly opposite this church, and while it had no architectural beauty, it was a lovely place. Although it became dilapidated, and nothing remains now except its mouldering foundations, it paid the cost a thousand fold, and is to me still a place of precious reminiscences. It was eminently identified with the interests of this Zion, and was, I doubt not, the birth-place of many souls. It was often filled to overflowing with anxious and prayerful worshipers, and especially in connection with those visitations of God's grace which we not unfrequently enjoyed. I shall never forget those seasons of light and joy—of "sweet communion, of solemn vows, of hymns of love and praise" in which I was permitted to participate in that "Conference Hall." Here the church met weekly for prayer. Here I had my bible classes and my meetings with the young people. For nearly twenty years of my

ministry, that hall was the place of my weekly resort, and many hundreds of times did I stand in it to direct both saints and sinners in the pathway to heaven. I saw too much of God's glory in that edifice to despise it. While it has vanished from my sight, "its dust and ruins that remain are precious in my eyes."

As I come down to later periods, more fresh in your recollection, it will hardly be necessary that I should go into minute particulars, and yet I cannot forbear, in honor of God's grace, to notice those subsequent seasons of Divine visitation we were permitted to enjoy.

After the first six years, embracing that great revival of which I have spoken, bringing the church up to more than two hundred members, there was an interval, not of great religious declension, and yet of no special movement. During this interval even, numbers were received into the church, and we had evidence that God had not wholly forsaken this vine; while the autumn of 1825 and the winter of 1826 greatly increased our evidence and joy in this regard, and furnished another blessed era in your history. This work was not as extensive as the former. About fifty were its hopeful subjects, most of whom were young persons. By referring to the "Annals" of Mr. Morse you will see the results of the revival as it regards additions to this church, as recorded at five successive communion seasons, to the number of forty-three. Among these was John Toohanee, a native of the Sandwich Islands, who for years resided in my family, whom I took to educate at the earnest solicitation of the lamented Jeremiah Evarts, Esq., then the able and efficient corresponding secretary of the A. B. C. F. M.

Thus God, in two signal instances, during the first eleven years of my ministry, was pleased to appear for us, and to encourage the hopes of the youthful pastor that he had not labored in vain. These revivals were the life and glory of this Zion. Indeed, had not God interposed in our behalf, and no additions been made to this church, it had, during the first eleven years, been nearly extinct;

whereas, in that time I had received to it two hundred and twenty-four persons. And here I would say these were not precipitated into the church. There were no hasty admissions. Against such I did uniformly protest. Time was given to try and prove these converts, and while some might have dishonored their profession, the great majority held on their way, and gave as good evidence of piety as do most Christians in this imperfect, erring world.

During the following four years, which brings us to 1831, there was no special movement among us. Zion mourned again; and some of us began to tremble for the ark of God. But not long was His mercy withheld. Early in the year 1831 there were renewed indications of God's special presence. And such was the state of things as to induce the pastor, at the earnest solicitation of some of the members of the church, to hold a protracted meeting. These meetings I had approached with great caution. I feared they would come to be depended upon, and bring into disrepute the ordinary means of grace on which, after all, was our principal reliance. Results proved that my fears were not entirely unfounded. But this was the great era of such meetings. They were extensively held throughout New England. I was often called abroad at a distance of twenty and even forty miles to attend them. The meeting held here was among a people too staid, too far removed from anything like wild-fire to allow of any such extravagance as marked these meetings in many places. It would have been a difficult matter to have got up anything of wild enthusiasm among the rather phlegmatic people of this farming population. Our blood did not circulate rapidly enough for this; hence I really had little fear of any feverish excitement, as being called forth by such a measure in Brimfield. The meeting held here was of only three days' continuance, and took place in May, 1831. While it awakened opposition among the sons of Belial, or rather of Beelzebub, whom their master induced to engage in some acts of filthy abomination, the meeting on the whole was an effective one, and that year

formed another memorable era in the history of my ministry in this place. The whole number received to the church as the fruit of that revival was sixty-one, of whom one-half were heads of families. There are some before me, to my certain knowledge, who made their espousals to Christ at that time, among whom are two who are now acting deacons in this church.

Scarcely one year had passed from the close of that revival, when our hopes were again encouraged. A goodly number had their attention called up, and while some of them relapsed into their former state of indifference, I cherished hope for about twenty; eight of whom I received to the church previous to my dismission, while a number of others were received soon after the settlement of my first successor. Thus God, in four instances during the twenty years and eight months of my first ministry, appeared in his glory to build up Zion. Little did I dream of such a ministry; both as to its length and its success, when on the second day of February, 1814, I entered upon my work here. Wonderful indeed, does it now appear to me, and still more wonderful that after a dismission and absence of three years in which I became pastor of another flock, the second church in Portland, Maine, I should have been invited to return and resume my ministry with you. That return took place in the autumn of 1837, when I was re-settled, and at the close of four years, into a few days, was again dismissed, making my entire ministry in Brimfield a quarter of a century, into about four months. Your wonderment at my leaving you in the first instance, after such a successful ministry among such an united people, might have been as great as was mine, that you should have invited me to return. The former might, perhaps, be regarded as an evidence of my fickleness, and the latter of your forbearance. Be this as it may, if I erred, you had the Christian magnanimity to forgive me.

Although I could not regret my happy connection with the precious flock over which for three years I had presided, enjoying, as I flattered myself I did, their confi-

dence and regard, yet when my old church and people, enthroned as they were, in my affections, condescended to ask me to return, it was quite too much for me. I could not stand that, or rather I could not *withstand* such an appeal. It touched anew, cords in my bosom which had been touched before, and which had been accustomed to vibrate in ardent affection towards you. After much prayerful deliberation, and with many misgivings at leaving my new and interesting field of labor, I sought a dismission which was granted me with mutual kind feelings, and took up my line of march for Old Brimfield.

Here I am bound to say that the question of a dismission from my pastoral charge in Portland would not have been agitated, but for the decline of my health, that locality proving unfavorable to my physical temperament. Doubtless my old charge would not have sought to invite my return had they not been informed that I contemplated a dismission, and that based on the fact that I had found Brimfield altogether more congenial to the vigor of my physical frame than the sea-air and city life of Portland, and so it proved, as I resumed the labors of the ministry here.

I cannot describe to you the tender emotions that were awakened in my bosom in being reinstated with my old flock, which took place November 1, 1837. The installing council was composed of some of the same fathers and brethren by whom I was *ordained* almost twenty-four years before. My brother, Rev. William F. Vaill, preached the sermon. It was refreshing to meet them again, as well as the familiar faces of my old and long cherished people. I found things as pleasant as I had anticipated, and saw, or thought I saw, so much evidence of returning affection and confidence, and withal such prospects of opening and continued usefulness, as to lead me to think that I had not taken a false step, and to induce me to hope that if I was to fulfill an half century in the ministry anywhere, it would be among the people of my youthful charge.

AFTERNOON SERMON.

"REMEMBER THE DAYS OF OLD, CONSIDER THE YEARS OF MANY GENERATIONS; ASK THY FATHER AND HE WILL SHOW THEE, THY ELDERS AND THEY WILL TELL THEE."

DEUTERONOMY, 32, 7.

If all the leading matters that stand immediately connected with the half century of my life that I am now reviewing, are to receive any measure of attention, I most fully perceive that I must put on a condenser.

It is fitting that I make my ministry *here* the main subject of my half century review, as it is through your respectful kindness that I perform this service; yet I am sure your interest in me will allow me to advert, without awakening your displeasure, to scenes and labors with which I have been conversant since my final separation from you, which took place on the 19th of October, 1841. But ere I enter upon these matters, I have not done yet with the incidents of my Brimfield pastorate. And in the first place, as to the last four years, on the entrance of which you found me at the close of my former sermon. They were years of peace, and I hope of usefulness. My salary was increased from five hundred and fifty to six hundred dollars.* I had given the people to understand

*As regards my early salary, it is fitting that I should say that the people, I believe, considered the $550 to which it amounted, better for me than $600 would have been, without the collateral proposals they made me. One of these was to give me a settlement of $500, i. e., nearly the amount of one year's salary in advance, and in addition to this, it was said, though no formal vote was taken on the subject, "we shall get you your wood." No fears were entertained but the wood would come, and come it did, good, generous loads, the donors vieing with each other, which should bring the largest and of the best quality. In one instance there came a load of chestnut, which the good man said, as a sort of apology, was to pay me for an occasional chestnut sermon, by which, I suppose he meant, a sermon that had some snap in it.

that in case of my return, they should remodel the meeting-house. And here I would say for the information of quite the younger part of my audience, that the former church to which I have already alluded and which was built in 1806, was about half-way between an ancient and a modern church edifice. Its external appearance was rather imposing, having columns in front, a very respectable looking steeple, and the entrances all at one end, as now. It was no mean looking structure. But why remodel it, do you inquire? In the first place its sittings were made up of square pews, bringing about one third of the audience with their backs to the speaker, rather a discourteous position as regards him, and not remarkably pleasant, one would think, to the hearer. These pews, in general, had neither carpet nor furniture.* And then, the pulpit was at a fearful elevation, which however, seemed rather necessary, not so much for preaching to the angels of heaven, but to give the preacher an opportunity to watch the roguish boys and girls, who, thus separated from their parents, pretty exclusively occupied the square pews that covered the outer surface of the deep and high galleries on all sides but one. For these and other valid and still more important reasons, its reconstruction became a desideratum. The people with commendable promptness, entered, in the course of the following year from my settlement, upon the undertaking, at an expense I believe, of some four thousand dollars. The house, which was rendered both commodius and beautiful, was so completed that its dedication took place on the 10th of January, 1839. I preached a dedication sermon. More than twenty ministers were present, as the Brookfield Association met with us at that time. That house during the ministry of my

* One reason perhaps why the pews were unfurnished might be found in the fact that all the municipal meetings for business were held in the body of the church in those days, and being days of tobacco mastication, and of course of indiscriminate discharge, our lady friends preferred occasionally to cleanse the floors of their pews than to have their carpets disfigured and ruined by tobacco saliva.

successor, Rev. G. C. Patridge, in the inscrutable providence of God, was burnt to the ground.

There were other events connected with my earlier ministry, that justice to my feelings will not allow me to pass over in silence. One of these was a severe sickness with which I was visited. For the first fourteen years of my ministry I was scarcely laid aside from the pulpit a single Sabbath, by bodily indisposition, nor was I in the habit of taking an annual vacation for health. In the autumn of 1828 I was visited with sickness and brought low by an attack of typhus fever, the first severe illness I ever experienced. For eight Sabbaths I was prevented from preaching, most of which were supplied through your liberality. Another scene of still deeper distress opened upon me the following February, in which I shared largely in your tender sympathies. My covenant God carried me through it, and while he took from me my beloved wife, the companion of my youth, in due time he gave me another, in whom I have ever since safely confided, and who has been to me truly an helpmeet in all my arduous labors and trials.

I would here state that during the last four years of my pastorate among you, some forty-six persons were received to this church, about one-half of whom came in by letter. At my last dismission, the church numbered two hundred and fifty-five of whom eighty-four were males and one hundred and seventy-one females. I have other statistics to present which I shall omit for the present, while I proceed to remind you of the reasons why my last ministry among you was so soon, and so unexpectedly to me brought to a close. And here, I must introduce you to Amherst College, with which, a considerable portion of my public life has been identified. To its board of Trustees I was elected in 1821, four years before it was incorporated, and when that act was granted in 1825, I was appointed by the Legislature a member of its corporation, being then thirty-five years of age, and younger by some

years than any other member of the board. I have held my connection with it now for forty-three years, longer than any other present member of the corporation by eight years. Every member with whom I was first associated, has departed this life, most of them, many years since.

Through your kindness, not so much to me personally, for it was a great tax upon my time and strength, you permitted me to labor for the college, which labor I early commenced and pursued through a series of years, by the appointment of the corporation, and at the earnest solicitation of its friends. I the more freely speak of my labors for this institution, as you my friends, are in some measure indebted to it, two of your pastors having been of its alumni, both of whom you greatly respected, the Rev. George C. Patridge and the Rev. Jason Morse.

As this college at the outset, depended solely on the charity of the Christian community, in addition to the many labors I performed in attending the meetings of the Board, and of the executive committee, of which I was pretty uniformly a member, I early entered upon the thankless work of collecting funds for the institution. As early as 1823 I took various excursions abroad for this purpose, and not without some success. In the following year I engaged again, and during that period was instrumental of securing about five thousand dollars. My next considerable agency was in 1827 and 1828, in the prosecution of which, I was absent from my people more than two months, my pulpit being supplied by individuals who were employed for a longer or shorter time, at the expense of the corporation. Notwithstanding the gratifying success of these efforts, the necessities of the college were hardly at all diminished. In 1832 an attempt was made to raise fifty thousand dollars, and I was again pressed into the agency, indeed the principal responsibility in doing it devolved upon me. For this purpose I visited New York and Boston and other cities, and on the

last of December I had the honor of filling up the subscription, which to make it binding, must be done before the close of that year. I wrote to the President from Boston, announcing the fact. So great was the joy at Amherst, on the receipt of the intelligence, that the college buildings were illuminated on the succeeding evening.

These miscellaneous labors for the college were scattered over the last ten years of my pastorate with you. I only wonder how you could have submitted to so many interruptions in my work among you. Surely I must give you or your fathers the credit of being a very patient or a very benevolent people, or both. It might be supposed that for this infant child of the church, that I had looked after and nursed, when in its cradle, I should feel some measure of interest as it came up to greater maturity. It had indeed stole my affections, so as to have become a sort of pet child. Although I traced my literary motherhood to Old Yale, yet young Amherst had secured a large place in my affections, and to see it linger out a miserable existence, after all the labor that had been bestowed upon it, I could not endure the thought. To save it from such a catastrophe I was ready to do anything in my power, even to the sacrificing of my pastoral connection with a people with whom I had become a second time so pleasantly connected. And here, I arrive at the reason of my final dismission from you, and my abandonment forever, of this lovely spot, as the place of my future abode. Here came the trial—the tug, the cutting off the right hand—the plucking out the right eye. While it cost *me* a mighty struggle, it cost my wife nearly, the sacrifice of her life. But duty called, and I must not confer with flesh and blood.

Temporary agencies for the college were not sufficient. Such were its necessities, that it became certain that its doors must be closed, unless some *protracted* and *efficient* agency were undertaken, both with reference to the outdoor affairs of the college at home, and the raising abroad,

a sum, not less than one hundred thousand dollars. On instituting such an agency, the corporation unanimously determined, at their meeting in the autumn of 1841, and to my great grief I was appointed to fill it, with no voice of dissent but my own. This brought me into positively the most painful dilemma of my life. But there was no resisting. There was but one voice in the matter, among the friends of the college abroad, and my friends here, magnanimously consented to give me up. I was accordingly dismissed, and in due time took leave of my quiet and pleasant home in this gem of a village, and of a people around whom, clustered the warmest affections of my heart, to be tost from pillar to post, over the land, in the thankless business of begging, and especially thankless, as it regarded Amherst College, which as a poor helpless child, had knocked so many times at the doors and hearts of the people as well as of the State, as to have created no small degree of impatience.

For four long years I was afloat on the wave, amid storm and sunshine, sometimes indeed, calm and pleasant, and then lashed up into foaming billows. But my covenant God was with me, and the prayers of the friends of the college were with me, and at length, after many a struggle, the work was, in some most gratifying measure, accomplished, and Amherst College breathed again, not with *feverish*, but quickened pulse. She breathes still, and never so freely as at this moment, and for aught I can discern, is like to breathe, till her walls shall crumble to dust at the last final catastrophe of the universe.

My four years at Amherst were years of great labor, anxiety and trial, but as to their usefulness to the church and the world, they form the culminating point of the half century of my public life, not excepting the most prosperous portions of it that marked my pastoral connection with you. I never for one moment regretted engaging in this work. Why should I? Dr. Edward Hitchcock, who was for ten years the President of the college, has very recently given

publicity to a book entitled "Reminiscences of Amherst College." In that he is pleased to say, alluding to those days of pecuniary struggle, "The General Agent never shrunk from the most arduous and trying labors in its behalf. He pleaded its cause with great success, and had it not been for the funds he obtained, I know not how it would have been carried forward." And in another place he says, alluding to the same General Agent, "He struggled manfully, and carried the college forward for years, when, without his efforts, it must have become bankrupt." This testimony of the late venerable President of the college, I would not here repeat, but for the fact of its truthfulness, and to confirm what has been said to me many times, and what I most fully believe, that but for this agency for the college, under God, its doors had at least for a season been closed, and "Ichabod" had been appropriately inscribed on its walls. Heaven forbid any *self*-glorification. Let the glory be given to God, who often uses feeble instruments for the accomplishment of His great purposes of mercy to the church and the world, that the glory may be seen to be His.

I have asked, Why should I regret my agency for Amherst college? Most surely I have no occasion to regret it, if the foregoing statements are reliable. Behold what has been wrought through its instrumentality in advancing the interests of sound learning, of natural and moral science and of evangelical religion! Behold what a multitude of young men, some of whom, as preachers, are among the most gifted in the land, has it sent forth to bless the world. Nearly half of its more than fifteen hundred graduates has it put into the ministry, numbers of whom are occupying some of the most important posts of usefulness in this land and in foreign countries. How many missionary stations all over the heathen world are now graced with the sons of Amherst! and to how many hundreds of churches has it given pious, faithful and efficient pastors! I thank God that I was thus early called

to labor for this school of the prophets, and it has more emphatically been such a school in proportion to the number of its graduates, than any other college in this, or, as I believe, in any other land.

You will all be gratified to learn that by the blessing of God, on the labors of its agents, and on the princely benefactions of its friends, among whom is to be found one of my former parishioners and your still respected fellow citizen,* the college is now in a state of high prosperity, taking its rank among the most respectable colleges in the land.

I have dwelt thus long upon this topic, as I could not well do otherwise in doing justice to myself and to you, as an item of the half century of my life which you have so kindly invited me to review in your presence.

Having finished my work at Amherst, my covenant God took me up and gently and quietly set me down in the goodly town of Somers, Connecticut, whose pulpit I had supplied in person or by proxy during the last six months of my college agency. My installation over that people took place August 6th, 1845, thirty-one and an half years from the time of my ordination in Brimfield. Dr. Edward Hitchcock preached the sermon. My ministry in this new field was pleasant but exceedingly laborious. I found myself among a well-instructed, ministerial people, whose fathers had been blessed with the pastorate of such men as the Rev. Dr. Charles Backus and William L. Strong, the former of whom kept here a school of the prophets, where he fitted for the ministry more than fifty men, numbers of whom were among the most distinguished in New England, one of whom was the grandfather of your present pastor.† Here I would remark, I wrote a history of Dr. Backus' divinity school, which is printed in the Congregational Quarterly.

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*Samuel A. Hitchcock, Esq.

†Rev. Alvan Hyde, D. D., for many years the minister of Lee, Massachusetts.

In 1846, soon after the meeting, in my church in Somers, of the General Association of the State of Connecticut, which took place in June, we experienced a happy revival of religion. About fifty were its hopeful subjects. During the last year of my ministry in that place it pleased God again to interpose His mercy in our behalf. Numbers were hopefully converted, who were gathered into the church just previous to my dismission or soon after, when I was called over from Palmer to administer the communion there, with reference to receiving other fruits of this revival.

Having spent more than nine years in Somers, and as I hope not in vain as it regards the success of my ministry, and having become worn down with the onerous labors of my charge, it seemed to me quite out of the question that I could much longer perform the laborious services of my pastorate there, among a people somewhat numerous and scattered as they were over an extended territory. Much as I loved the people, and much as they respected me, I took occasion, after prayerful deliberation, to signify my intention of relinquishing my pastoral charge in Somers, and of accepting of another that had been offered me, which presented a smaller and more compact field, and a reduction of pastoral work at least one-half, with no reduction of stipend. Having reached the age of sixty-four, an age which at this day is wont to throw ministers out of the market, I really felt that if I might be continued a little longer in the field, it would be a happy movement to come to Palmer and spend the few remaining years of my life, if years should yet be granted, among a people whose fathers had known me in my youthful ministry, who had often listened to my voice from the pulpit, and moreover where I should be brought within a few miles of my early and long-cherished home, and where I might renew my acquaintance with the people and the place around which clustered so many tender recollections. And then there was another consideration: I should be brought nearer to

that beautiful field of sepulchres where reposed so many of my early parishioners and a precious portion of my own dear family, and where I had formed the purpose that my own mortal remains should find their last resting-place.

My Somers charge saw the case, and very kindly consented to my removal, though apparently with much reluctance on the part of many, whose regard for me and my family had been, in many ways, most abundantly expressed.

I was duly dismissed at Somers on the first day of December, 1854, and on the sixth of the same month and year was duly installed pastor of the second church in Palmer, where, through Divine kindness, I still remain, having entered upon the tenth year of my pastorate there, and the seventy-fourth of my life, and where, in the great forbearance of my covenant God, I find myself performing the usual functions of the ministerial office, as the clock of time strikes *fifty years* since first I planted my youthful feet in old Brimfield.

My installation over my present charge was to me an occasion of more than ordinary interest. The council was graced with the presence of such men as Drs. Snell, Ely, Osgood and Bond, your former neighbor and my most intimate and beloved associate, who preached the sermon. To these I might add the names of Rev. Messrs. Tuck, Wilson, Bowers, and last but not least, your own beloved Morse, who with brother Bowers and Drs. Snell and Osgood, have gone before me to their reward—just half of the clerical members of that council. My ministry in Palmer has been, in many respects, a very pleasant one. Our union, which at the beginning was of a most gratifying character, has been most happily continued, with a constant increase in the congregation, and with no apparent diminution of interest in the pulpit performances of the unworthy pastor.

If he does not enjoy the confidence and good feeling of his people, he is yet to learn the fact. I shall be excused

if I dwell a little here on my *present* connection, both from the consideration that it is still present, and will, of course, form the winding up of my *ministerial* life. Nor do I at present, see any reason why I shall not *die* in Palmer, and find my grave among my old parishioners in Brimfield, according to my often expressed desires. Through the kindness of my people, in many ways manifested, my life has been rendered very pleasant here, and I hope my labors have not been in vain in the Lord. With pastoral duties greatly diminished, more time has been afforded me for study and general reading, and then, situated on so many great thoroughfares, I have been kept advised of the fact that the world yet moves, while I have been furnished with sources of valuable information, of which I must have been in some degree deprived in so retired a locality as Somers.

While I commenced my ministry in Palmer amid apparently the good feelings of my charge, and have had the happiness of witnessing a general improvement in their religious interests, there was no marked evidence of the special presence of the Holy Spirit, till the autumn and winter of 1857, when it pleased God to grant us a most precious visitation of His grace. It was truly a *revival of religion*, some of the fruits of which have already been garnered up on high, while other fruit remains still to bless this "infant daughter of Zion." As the results of this revival, about forty were gathered into the church, which numbers now one hundred and nine members, twenty-three of whom are absentees. While we lack vitality in our religious experience at the present time, which is greatly to be lamented, our general religious condition has manifestly greatly improved since my pastorate in Palmer commenced. The number in attendance on the Sabbath's worship has steadily advanced. Our Sabbath school has held on its way with augmented interest. Our church music has been maintained to a most gratifying extent. Our charitable contributions have increased some

fifty per cent.; and as for the order and beauty of our worship, there has been an improvement too apparent to be overlooked or undervalued. With this general report of my present ministry at Palmer, I shall leave this matter, reserving the numerical statistics of it to be hereafter stated.

And here, my friends, you must allow me to give you a sort of general summary of my work for these fifty years of my public life, in grateful testimony of God's merciful kindness to me, and not, as I hope, in the smallest degree in the spirit of self-adulation.

I begin this summary, with my ministry in Brimfield, which was the longest and on the whole, the most successful of my life. I have already stated how many years it covered, it being twenty-four and eight months. During that period I received four hundred and twelve persons to the church, of whom three hundred and twenty-three were by profession. I administered six hundred baptisms, one hundred and thirty-three of the subjects being adults. I officiated at about six hundred funerals and joined in marriage, during my entire pastorate in Brimfield, two hundred and seventy-five couples. These marriage scenes were, in general, among the then youthful ones of my charge, in which, you know, I always mingled with as buoyant spirits as any of you. They were to you, and to me, the sunshine of life, while placed over against those other scenes, in which I was more often called to mingle with you, when clouds had enveloped the sun, and shades and darkness wrapt their gloomy folds around you. Often was I called to mourn with those that mourned. There are but few dwellings that stood here at the time of my ministry, in which I have not been called to mingle my tears with yours, on the occasion of the removal of some one or more of their cherished inmates. But I cannot dwell on this mournful topic. As to the number of sermons I preached here, and the number of meetings I attended and conducted, I cannot tell you. They may both

be reckoned by thousands. My labors among you in behalf of your Sabbath schools and imparting biblical instruction to the youth in my more extended bible classes, should not be overlooked, nor would your fathers, if they yet lived, have forgotten my efforts in the cause of benevolence, and of temperance.

But I must pass to my brief ministry in Portland, Maine. The church over which I presided, had come down, from under the pastorate of such men as Drs. Payson and Tyler, and was, at that time, the largest in the State. My three years there, were those of incessant toil. I preached in my own pulpit two hundred and seventy sermons, besides many that I preached in other pulpits in the city and out of it. I delivered during the three years, five ordination sermons, and others, on special occasions. I instructed a bible class which I met fifty times, and which was attended with from one hundred and fifty to two hundred young people. Once in two weeks, I met from sixty to seventy children for catechetical instruction. I received fifty-one to the church, administered fifty-six baptisms, officiated at seventy-five funerals, and solemnized sixty-six marriages.

I pass to my ministry in Somers. During that, I received one hundred and six to the church, administered seventy-five baptisms, officiated at two hundred funerals, preaching, according to the custom of the place, one hundred and fifty funeral sermons, and joined in marriage one hundred and fifteen couples, and here I might add, I attended thirty-six councils and preached six ordination and installation sermons. In addition to these services, I made one hundred and eighty school visits.

As to my ministry in Palmer thus far prosecuted, I would say, I have received to the church seventy-six persons, about half of whom by profession, and more than belonged to it at my settlement. I have administered thirty-eight baptisms, have officiated at one hundred and twenty funerals, and have solemnized seventy-eight marriages. Taking the aggregate under the four last named

heads—and in the four places of my settlement—I am allowed to say, that I have received six hundred and forty-five persons to the church, mostly by profession, have administered seven hundred and sixty-seven baptisms, officiated at eight hundred and ninety-six funerals and joined in marriage five hundred and thirty-six couples. I may add that I have preached in all, twenty-four ordination and installation sermons, besides a considerable number on special occasions abroad, before missionary and benevolent societies. The one preached before the Hampshire Missionary Society at Northampton, was printed by request of the Society. I preached by appointment, the annual sermon before the General Association of Massachusetts, at its session in Dorchester, in the year 1833.

In this place I would say, that during my connection with Amherst College, in addition to the raising of funds, and superintending the out-door affairs of the college, I was often called to preach in the chapel and at lectures in the rhetorical room. I also preached abroad in the course of my agency in more than one hundred and fifty different pulpits, and probably not less than three hundred sermons. From the most reliable data, I conclude that I must have preached more than seven thousand times, and not less than six thousand written sermons, though my manuscript sermons will not greatly exceed two thousand, and of course many of them have been preached again and again. In my evening lectures and weekly meetings, my sermons were all extemporaneous, while I very seldom ventured into the pulpit on the Sabbath without written discourses.

It will not, I hope, be thought vanity in me, if I here glance at some of the various calls to other localities that were tendered me during my early ministry in Brimfield. Once, I was appointed Secretary of the Massachusetts Home Missionary Society, and General Agent for Home Missions in the New England States. And again, I received the appointment to the Western Agency of the

American Home Mission Society of New York, which agency embraced the seventeen western counties of that State. Soon after, I was offered the chaplaincy of the Mariner's Church in the city of Boston. I also received at a later period a formal call to settle in Belchertown and Princeton, Massachusetts, and in Palmyra in the State of New York. All which invitations, I felt it my duty to decline, till after almost twenty-one years of exhausting labor among you, I yielded to the unanimous invitation of the second church in Portland. Allow me to add, that I have been for more than thirty years a member of the Academy Board at Monson, and have taken a lively interest in that institution. I have also been a member of the Amherst Academy corporation, and while in Maine was made a trustee of the Theological Seminary at Bangor. But I must desist.

Thus, my friends, has God conducted me along for these fifty years, giving me health and strength far in advance of what falls to the lot of multitudes, and a disposition, I trust, to engage with cheerfulness, in all the arduous labors to which he, in his providence, has called me. Little as I have done, and unprofitable as I have been, I stand wrapt in astonishment unutterable,—as I cast my thoughts back—over these fifty years of public labor, while I think of the amount I have been enabled to perform, in my public official capacity, having at the same time, a somewhat numerous family of my own to provide for and settle in life. To say nothing of my motives, my conscience does not accuse me of idleness. And in this connection, I would mention, with gratitude, that my domestic comforts through all these fifty years, has been as many and as precious as fall to the lot of most ministers. I have never suffered under pecuniary embarrassment, nor have I ever lacked on the score of personal conveniences, and now at seventy-three I am as happy and cheerful a man, for aught I know, as can be found among ministers.

I see, in the retrospect, great deficiences, and while I mourn over them and pray God to pardon them, I would remember all the way in which he has led me these fifty years, and give him glory, that I yet live to stand in his courts, to plead his cause, and especially to meet the posterity of my early and greatly respected parishioners in Brimfield, and in compliance with their kind request give these brief reminiscences. Many most interesting reflections here rush upon my mind; would I had time to present them. First of all, human mutability arrests my thoughts. Oh the changes witnessed here—everywhere! How changed the scene from fifty years ago, when a youth of twenty-three, without a grey lock or a wrinkle, I stood up for the first time as the pastor of this church and preached to your honored sires my introductory sermon to a ministry here of almost a quarter of a century. It was from those never to be forgotten words: "And I brethren, when I came to you came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." That sermon was preached February 6th, 1814, fifty years ago yesterday. On whose ears, think you, did it fall? not yours, not yours, except in but very few instances. Most of you were unborn, while very many of those that listened to my voice on that day, have long since found their lodging in the grave. Oh how changed the scene! Fifty years ago I met your fathers. To-day, I meet their children and their children's children. But when another fifty years have passed away, whom will the preacher meet here? Not you, not you.

Most truthfully has the poet said:

"And where the fathers lie,
Must all the children dwell;
Nor other heritage possess,
But such a gloomy cell."

And how appropriately may it be added:

"Of all the pious dead
May we the footsteps trace,
Till with them, in the land of light,
We dwell before God's face."

But how changed the scene, not only here, but around us in our country's history; amid the beat of the war-drum, the clangor of arms, the confused noise of the battle of the warrior, garments rolled in blood, and a million of men called to the mighty conflict to meet a foe—oh tell it not!—in the character of rebels against the noblest form of government the world ever saw. Little did your fathers or the speaker dream, fifty years ago, that he should stand here to address you to-day in the midst of the most sanguinary, terrible civil war this world has ever witnessed. How long, O Lord, how long, ere it shall be staid? There are other changes touching this people on which I might profitably and gratefully reflect. I allude to change of character. How many that were far gone in the way to ruin, have been reclaimed! How many dwellings have become vocal with the voice of prayer, in which once that voice was silent as the grave! It cannot be concealed that during the last fifty years there has been a great revolution in the moral condition of this community, and that revolution had its origin in those great revivals, that attended my early but unworthy ministry. I shall never cease to thank God, that fifty years ago he sent me to Brimfield, while I hope to meet in heaven hundreds from this place as the seals of my ministry and as my hope and joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.

In this connection, and in reviewing my ministry among you, I wish to bear my earnest testimony in your hearing, to the importance of preaching plainly, faithfully, and in its beautiful simplicity, the "truth as it is in Jesus," "not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." There is nothing

that will supply the place of such preaching. No amount of metaphysical lore, no display of fine writing or of rhetorical flourish, no show of learning, or of theological acuteness, none of these, will serve as a substitute for gospel truth, plainly and faithfully declared. A fastidious taste may be gratified, itching ears may be pleased, but souls will not be saved, nor Christ's approval be secured. In this place of my youthful pastorate, and in the hearing of the posterity of the venerated fathers and mothers with whom I commenced my ministry fifty years ago, I desire to bear my testimony to the importance of preaching always and everywhere, the "truth as it is in Jesus." This, and this only, is the sword of the Spirit. This has been the grand instrument in all the wondrous displays of God's grace, that have been witnessed here. In all coming time, if you shall be blessed with revivals, if this church is to live, and vital religion is to live and flourish here, it will be only through the faithful preaching of the "truth as it is in Jesus." Unfaithful as I might have been, it gives me pleasure to believe that you secured in each of my successors, men whose preaching has been thus marked. This I am sure, is pre-eminently true of the present incumbent of this pulpit, and as such I give him most cordially the right hand of Christian and ministerial fellowship.

There is another thing, to which I wish to bear my dying testimony. It is to the importance of ministers urging upon their people, their obligation to engage in all those great philanthropic and benevolent operations, that are now everywhere presented for the patronage of the Christian community. The life blood of the church is found here. "It is more blessed to give than receive." Here, that fruit of our piety is to be brought forth, that will "abound to our account." A parsimonious church is not a church of Christ. It may have a name to live, but it is dead. While as you will bear me witness, I took a deep interest during my ministry here in

the great benevolent movements of the age, I thank God that I was permitted to witness a most gratifying advance among you as regards this matter. Your fathers came nobly up to the work, and I have reason to believe that their posterity have imbibed the same spirit. There is scarcely anything in review of my ministerial life in this place that affords me more satisfaction, along with souls converted, than to behold the monuments that have been reared here in behalf of the noble cause of Christian benevolence.

There was no such occasion then as now, for any special display of patriotism; but now, when our bleeding country has called for her loyal sons to go forth to fight her battles with rebels against her government, I am happy to know that such a ready response has been given among the sons of Old Brimfield, while I drop the tear of sorrow over the untimely fate of so goodly a number, that have laid their lives on the altar their country. It is no incongruity to believe that even feelings of joy mingle with the sad memories. You may well thank God that you had sons that would die for their beloved country.

But I must close. And yet how can I do it till I have tendered to you my congratulations, in view of your past and present prosperity. I congratulate you as I behold this lovely and commodious temple, now seen in its new and comely dress, reared over the ashes of that holy and beautiful edifice which preceded it, which was very dear to my heart. I congratulate you in view of what my eyes see in looking over this congregation, that you have not forsaken the assembling of yourselves together on God's day.

I congratulate you in your present ministry, God having in his inscrutable providence taken your late much loved pastor to his reward, that he has given you another whom you love, and in whom I have the most perfect confidence. I congratulate you in view of all your prosperity, both temporal and spiritual, while I pray God that he

would continue to bestow his grace upon you in still richer measures than have been enjoyed even in those days of his wonder-working power.

And I congratulate you, my dear Brother Hyde, that your lot is cast among a ministerial people who, if you serve them faithfully, will not allow you to want for any good thing. If they make provision for you as they did for me, you will never come to want; provided, as I believe you do, you know how to take care of yourself. I congratulate you in that you have already to a good degree won the confidence and love of your dear people, and that your labors among them are so acceptable. May God grant you long life and many happy years with this flock, and while you stand before them from Sabbath to Sabbath as their spiritual guide, and mingle with them in labors abundant, may he give you many more souls as seals of your ministry than were given to your unworthy predecessor.

And now dear brethren and friends, in taking my leave of you, on an occasion that awakens in my bosom such tender emotions, I most cordially thank you for your kind indulgence in giving me this opportunity, before I put off my tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance. It may be the last time I shall ever address you. My work on earth is nearly done. Grey hairs have multiplied upon my brow, and old age is asserting her claims for a hearing. While I ask you to allow my remains to find a resting place in yonder cemetery, I beg an interest in your prayers, that the last days of my pilgrimage may be days of usefulness and peace, and God grant we may finally meet in heaven to part no more forever. Amen.